

BOOK REVIEWS

BERNHARD, Andrew, *Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts*. London: T&T Clark, 2007. Paperback. ISBN 0567045684. Pp. xiv + 193.

In this book, Andrew Bernhard completes a research project which started at Willamette University and matured at Oxford, where he edited some of the Oxyrhynchus papyri. Bernhard also hints that the book is a response to Stanley E. Porter's call "for a new critical edition of 'Greek apocryphal gospel papyri' at the 21st International Congress of Papyrology in 1995" (2). All those papyri mentioned by Porter are included in Bernhard's edition. As the title suggests, it contains other early Christian gospels, specifically the Greek manuscripts of the *Gospel of Thomas* (P.Oxy. 654; P.Oxy. 1; P.Oxy. 655), *Gospel of Peter* (P.Oxy. 4009; P.Cair. 10759; P.Oxy. 2949), the *Unknown Gospel* (P.Egerton 2 + P.Köln 225) and six other unidentified gospel fragments (P.Vindob.G 2325; P.Mert. 51; P.Oxy. 210; P.Oxy. 1224; P.Oxy. 840; P.Berol. 11710). Each of these groupings respectively forms the chapters of the book. It is therefore a collection of NT apocryphal gospels, of which most (except the six unidentified gospel fragments) date before 130 AD. The addition of P.Oxy. 210 may seem unusual to some readers, as it is often omitted in some NT apocrypha editions. Bernhard does not hesitate to clearly define the term gospel as a text which recounts details of the *adult life* of Jesus [his italics]. Therefore, P.Cair. 10735, P.Oxy. 3525, P.Ryl. 463 and P.Oxy. 1081 are not included in his collection since they are not classified as "gospels" according to the specifications in the book (2). There are obviously no Coptic manuscripts in the book.

With regard to the editing of the manuscripts, Bernhard follows a rather simple and clear editorial method, with an adequate and effective critical apparatus. Every apocryphal gospel is preceded by an introduction. However, these introductions not only make cursory remarks on the contents and historical background of the texts, but rather provide a wealth of text critical and bibliographical data of the papyri. This constantly reminds the reader that Bernhard worked closely with the original manuscripts or their photographs. One could argue that more introductory information could have been provided, although the aim of the book is to produce a critical version of the texts themselves, rather than an in-depth introduction to the NT apocryphal gospels (5). But it is in the presentation of the texts that one finds appreciation for Bernhard's work. Every text is presented in three ways: firstly, the left-hand page provides a structured Greek text with all the editorial signs and critical apparatus; secondly, the right-hand page presents a paragraphed Greek text, with no editorial signs or critical apparatus, followed by a literal translation. (As a result of this interface, paper was not used sparingly in the publication, with the greater part of over two-hundred pages being mostly blank. Some pages only contain four or five lines of brief text, with the rest of the page blank.) Useful paleographical

remarks are limited to footnotes, as not to clutter the presentation of the texts. The book also contains very helpful indexes of all the words (including restored words) occurring in the gospels in alphabetical order.

The introductions at the beginning of every chapter provide a short history of the papyri being discussed. Bernhard makes significant archaeological and paleographical remarks in the light of relevant secondary sources, all occurring in footnotes. Respectively, every papyrus is briefly discussed under the following sub-headings: contents, date copied, basic description, *nomina sacra*, other notable features, current housing location, museum ID, first published edition, and official publication & colour manuscript photos. At the end of every introductory chapter other important editions of the texts are mentioned. Bernhard does not provide a commentary on the texts.

The final pages of the book, which are not numbered, provide 31 plates of the manuscripts. Most of these plates are of a good quality (especially plates 8 to 16 of the nine pages of the Akhmim Fragment [P.Cair. 10759]), while others are very unclear (such as plate 27 of P.Oxy. 840, of which only the back is given). Not every manuscript has its photo published. The author does apologize for parts of manuscripts that are not included in the plates, such as P.Vindob.G 2325, P.Mert. 51, P.Oxy. 1224 and P.Oxy. 840 (7).

There is no doubt regarding the value of Bernhard's contribution to the textual criticism of the NT apocryphal gospels in this publication. But does it function effectively as an aid or handbook to students? The presentation of the texts does make it a user-friendly publication, especially for students who are unaccustomed to reading lacunae and their restorations. The editorial signs and critical apparatus are easy to comprehend, and should not demonstrate any difficulty to students accustomed to working with the Greek texts. Most importantly, the book serves to introduce the student to the very manuscripts themselves through the science of textual criticism, paleography and papyrology. The book is useful even if the aim is only to have the student translate some NT apocryphal Greek texts to introduce him/her to the language and style of the early apocryphal gospels. This, along with the useful indexes and plates certainly support the use of the book by students.

There are some factors, however, which work against the use of the book by average students. The book does assume a foreknowledge of the Gospels, and beginners would have to read this book along with a detailed introduction to the NT apocrypha. The technical information of this advanced publication may be daunting to average students, especially if the student is not familiar with the collections of papyri. The absence of a commentary on the texts may also be disappointing to students who seek more information on the texts. Furthermore, the price of the book (nearly £50!) could be a problem to students who need to purchase the book.

Bernhard's book is a valuable asset to all scholars who study the texts of the NT apocryphal gospels, and is certainly a convenient and user-friendly source for the Greek versions of the manuscripts. Intermediate and advanced students of NT apocrypha and textual criticism would also reap the benefits of the publication, but

for students unaccustomed to textual criticism, paleography and basic introductory information of the NT apocrypha, the book is not recommended.

Chris de Wet, *Univ. of Pretoria/Aucklandpark Theol. Seminary*,
chrisldw@mweb.co.za

HUBER, Lynn, *Like a Bride Adorned: Reading metaphor in John's Apocalypse* (Emory Studies in Early Christianity). New York and London: T & T Clark International, 2007. Softcover. ISBN-13:978-0-567-02674-3, Pp 221.

Launching into her study of metaphor in John's Apocalypse, Lynn Huber recalls that as early as the third century, readers debated on how to interpret Revelation and whether or not it was worth interpreting. One of the primary things she sees as prompting this debate was the symbolic or imagistic nature of this text. "As the narrative account of a mystical vision, which includes a trip into the heavenly realm to view future events, Revelation consists of countless fantastic images. These images—multiwinged-beasts, scarlet dragons, furious angels among other things—are simply not part of the day to day reality experienced by humans. As a result, interpreters have continually struggled with how to understand these images: Are they to be understood literally, read symbolically, or do they function as some sort of code?" To this day, says Huber, readers have not reached a consensus regarding the method for interpreting the various images recorded in John's Revelation.

In the first half of *Chapter 1* Huber explores how representative interpreters understand and approach the images and figures within the text—Dionysius, Irenaeus, Tertullian, Augustine, Joachim of Fiore. In the second half she turns the discussion to some of the ways in which modern interpreters understand and approach the figures and images within texts laden with nuptial imagery, namely Revelation 19:7-9 and 21:1-4, 9-11:1. She discusses this imagery that occurs in a number of related contexts: (1) history of religions studies focusing on the mythic background of Revelation; (2) full-scale commentaries on Revelation that generally note the Jewish and early Christian "backgrounds" of the nuptial imagery; (3) literary-functional readings of Revelation that address the nuptial imagery as a rhetorical device related to the image of the great prostitute; (4) feminist critical readings of revelation that seek to expose the ways in which gender functions in the text.

Two of these she mentions in literary-functional readings will have significant impact on her understanding of metaphor: One, Paul Minear who explicitly criticizes the tendency of scholars to treat the images of and metaphors of Revelation as code words for historical realities, finding such a tendency to be 'literalism and historicism at its worst'. Instead he maintains the importance of determining the meaning of the images within their narrative context. The other, Edith McEwan Humphrey who investigates the function of the woman/ building function as a symbol of transformation in a number of apocalyptic texts, including Revelation, *Joseph and Asenath*, *4 Ezra* and the *Shepherd of Hermas*.

In *Chapter Two* Huber touches on two important discussions on metaphor. "First the ancient and medieval theorists set the terms of the conversation about the nature